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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DOHA 000179

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PHUM QA SU

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF STATE SEEKS U.S. HELP WITH EGYPT ON
DARFUR

REF: STATE 21511

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

(C) KEY POINTS

-- Ambassador asked the GOQ to get Sudanese President Bashir to allow the expelled NGO's to return to Darfur, in a meeting March 10 with MFA Minister of State Al-Mahmoud.

-- In response, Al-Mahmoud said the GOQ had just raised this issue with the GOS, in meetings earlier in the day with the small GOS delegation in Doha.

-- The GOS delegation said the GOS has no objection to having the expelled NGOs return to work under the auspices of the International Red Cross, according to Al-Mahmoud

-- In the GOS view, the NGOs that were expelled violated Sudanese law, Al-Mahmoud said. Apparently, the GOS believes some of the information used in preparing the ICC indictment of Bashir came from at least some of the organizations the GOS had expelled, said Al-Mahmoud

-- Al-Mahmoud asked that the USG approach Egypt for support of Qatar's Initiative on Darfur.

-- Al-Mahmoud said the Amir's recent meeting with Qadhafi in Libya shored up Libyan support, especially for Libya's mediation between Chad and Sudan.

-- Finally, Al-Mahmoud outlined next steps in the Qatari-led initiative. Please see paras. 13-15.

(C) COMMENTS

-- Our fears that the strained political relationship between Egypt and Qatar over Gaza would spill over into the Qatar-led Darfur Initiative appear to have been realized. Al-Mahmoud openly seeks our help in encouraging Egypt to be helpful to Qatar and Bassole on Darfur, and we should weigh in with Cairo.

-- It appears for now that Libyan cooperation with Qatar on the Darfur Initiative, which has also been a concern, is on track.

End Key Points and Comments.

GOS NGO EXPULSION

¶11. (C) Ambassador raised March 10 with Minister of State Ahmed Al-Mahmoud our concerns (reftel demarche) about the Government of Sudan's expulsion of various NGOs in retaliation for the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictments of President Bashir.

¶12. (C) Al-Mahmoud responded that Qatar's Ambassador to the United States had briefed him on the Qatari Ambassador's meeting earlier in the week with Acting A/S Carter on this matter. Ambassador then asked Al-Mahmoud for a response on the specific USG request that Qatar use its good offices with President Bashir to advocate the return of the expelled NGOs.

¶13. (C) Al-Mahmoud said he had raised the issue in meetings earlier that morning with the small GOS delegation that had stayed in Doha after Round 1 of the negotiations. According to the delegation, the GOS has no objection to having the expelled NGOs return to Sudan, if they work under the auspices of the International Red Cross.

¶14. (C) In the GOS view, the NGOs that were expelled violated Sudanese law, Al-Mahmoud said. He understood from the GOS delegation that some of the information used in preparing the ICC indictment of Bashir came from at least some of the organizations the GOS had expelled.

¶15. (C) The Minister of State observed that he had always been concerned that ICC indictments of ranking Sudanese officials could pose problems for Qatar's Initiative on Darfur. That said, Qatar's Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General had worked the phones to keep the peace process on track, and Qatar intends to press ahead regardless of ICC actions.

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U.S. ASKED TO WEIGH IN WITH EGYPT

¶16. (C) Al-Mahmoud's immediate concern is making sure that Egypt remains on board with Qatar's Initiative on Darfur. He told Ambassador that Bassole would travel soon to Cairo to urge Egypt's continued support for what Bassole and Qatar are trying to accomplish.

¶17. (C) Al-Mahmoud said the GOQ would appreciate a message of support from the U.S. to the Egyptians likewise encouraging Egypt's support for the Initiative. Al-Mahmoud remarked that Qatar had Egypt's assurances of support (Note: Prior to the two countries' public row in December over the Gaza War) but now it is essential to keep them on board.

LIBYAN SUPPORT FIRMER THAN BEFORE

¶18. (C) Libya, which Al-Mahmoud said has wavered in its support for the Darfur Initiative, now appears to be fully on board. Qadhafi gave his personal assurances on this to the Amir during the Amir's last visit to Tripoli.

¶19. (C) During the meetings in Libya, the Amir (accompanied by Al-Mahmoud) sought Qadhafi's support in bringing SLM Unity to the negotiating table in Doha. Qadhafi gave his assurances that he would help, and Al-Mahmoud reported that since the meeting in Libya SLM Unity has agreed to participate in the next round of talks in Doha. (Note: According to press reports, talks will occur "in about three weeks," i.e. early April.)

¶10. (C) Al-Mahmoud said Bassole was very pleased with this progress, and Al-Mahmoud underscored that he and Bassole are in frequent communication on developments on Darfur. Al-Mahmoud said Bassole intends to brief the UNSC March 26 in New York.

¶11. (C) Returning to the meetings in Libya, Al-Mahmoud noted that Libya "retains the Sudan/Chad file." Based on the Amir's meetings with Qadhafi and President Deby of Chad, Sudan and Chad will work with Libya to resolve the disputes between them.

¶12. (C) Al-Mahmoud characterized the Amir's meeting with Deby as "fruitful and honest." He believed Deby wants to have a good relationship with Sudan and desires to stop the hostilities and the bleeding along the border. With Libyan support, Al-Mahmoud also reported that Chad's FM had since communicated to Al-Mahmoud that preparations are underway for Chad to participate in the next round of discussions in Doha.

NEXT STEPS

¶13. (C) Al-Mahmoud told Ambassador he and Bassole are preparing a "strategy to deal with concerns we expect SLM Unity to raise." Separately, Qatar and Bassole had gone back to JEM and the GOS, reminding both parties that their input to the framework agreement between them was supposed to have been received by now. Al-Mahmoud reported that he expects to have the input from both parties in two weeks (around March 24). JEM, he said, asked for three weeks, but Bassole and Al-Mahmoud have been firm that the input needs to arrive in two weeks.

¶14. (C) Al-Mahmoud said he and Bassole aim to absorb SLM Unity, the Fur and others into the JEM/GOS framework. If that does not work, Al-Mahmoud said they would try for separate frameworks with the individual opposition parties and attempt to merge the various frameworks before a final agreement is ready for the signature of all parties, government and opposition.

¶15. (C) Al-Mahmoud said power-sharing, wealth-sharing, and reconciliation need to be addressed in a framework agreement (or agreements) before taking the next step forward toward negotiations on a final agreement.

PRISONER EXCHANGE

¶16. (C) Ambassador asked Al-Mahmoud for the status of the DOHA 00000179 003 OF 003

prisoner exchange between JEM and the GOS and asked if that was holding back progress. Al-Mahmoud responded that he and Bassole had yet to receive lists of prisoners from both parties. They would compare the lists and try to move forward on the issue once they had the lists in hand. During the talks just before the Ambassador's meeting, Al-Mahmoud said JEM made no mention of the prisoner exchange as a condition for progress on the framework agreement.

LeBaron